



Journal de la société des américanistes

91-2 | 2005
tome 91, n° 2

MAUZÉ Marie, Michael E. HARKIN and Sergei KAN (eds), *Coming to shore. Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 2004, xxxviii + 504 p., bibl., ill.

Christer Lindberg



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jsa/3044>
ISSN: 1957-7842

Publisher

Société des américanistes

Printed version

Date of publication: 5 December 2005
Number of pages: 229-230
ISSN: 0037-9174

Electronic reference

Christer Lindberg, « MAUZÉ Marie, Michael E. HARKIN and Sergei KAN (eds), *Coming to shore. Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 2004, xxxviii + 504 p., bibl., ill. », *Journal de la société des américanistes* [Online], 91-2 | 2005, Online since 17 October 2006, connection on 23 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jsa/3044>

This text was automatically generated on 23 April 2019.

© Société des Américanistes

MAUZÉ Marie, Michael E. HARKIN and
Sergei KAN (eds), *Coming to shore*.
*Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions,
and Visions*, University of Nebraska
Press, Lincoln and London, 2004,
xxxviii + 504 p., bibl., ill.

Christer Lindberg

- 1 « Structuralism is coming back ! That's the only way out of the postmodernist aporia. » Over the last couple of years this message has been heard from younger colleagues in international anthropological meetings, according to Pierre Maranda (p. 90) in an essay discussing the impact of structuralism presented at the University of British Columbia. *Coming to Shore : Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions* is a collection of papers from on such conference called « The Northwest Coast Ethnology Conference » that was held in Paris, France, in June 2000. Initially spurred by Claude Lévi-Strauss's 90th birthday, the conference became a manifestation of several years of collaboration among the most prominent researchers in the field of Northwest Coast Ethnology.
- 2 The legacy of Claude Lévi-Strauss and his impact in the field of social anthropology is unquestionable. Many of us have been fascinated and inspired by his work, even though his method on several occasions has been both misunderstood and misused. Personally, I would not mind the return of Lévi-Straussian structuralism in one way or another, but let us not overlook Marjorie Myers Halpin's conclusion « ... that structural analysis has been little done in American and British anthropology. Most of what one sees are either works of Lévi-Strauss himself or discussions of his works » (p. 102).
- 3 It is a well-known fact the Northwest Coast ethnographical material played a paradigmatic role in Lévi-Strauss's research on mythology, art and social organization, and *Coming to Shore* offers a reanalysis of the story of Asdiwal written by Margaret Seguin

Anderson. She is of course using the famous essay by Lévi-Strauss as a point of departure. But, the book incorporates a wide range of perspectives and if it is representative of the present-day research pertaining to the Northwest Coast, one must note that focus is no longer on the classical Lévi-Straussian topics of art, myth, ritual, and kinship. It even seems as if ecology were going out of fashion as well. As the result of reflexivity and/or political pressure the collaboration with native peoples is the motto of the day. The papers presented concern Indian-white relations, fur trade, mission, and fishing industry, as well as the documentation and evaluation of the contribution of native ethnographers to Northwest Coast studies. Historical changes, and particularly the politics of cultural representation are other well-represented topics in the book with contributions by Bruce Miller, Daniel Boxberger, and Patricia Erikson. Related is the essay by Sergei Kan, one of the co-editors, where the phenomenon of tourism is presented as a major interaction between native people and outsiders.

- 4 For myself, as an historian of our discipline, *Coming to Shore* is a book that offers many new and valuable insights concerning the connections among French, Canadian, and American anthropologies of this region. Marie Mauzé provides an historical account of the long history of relationship between French anthropology and the Northwest Coast, from explorers such as Lapérouse and de Roquefeuil, via Durkheim and Mauss, to the Lévi-Straussian structuralism. North America was almost the exclusive domain of Mauss in the *Année sociologique*, but with *The Gift* he made the Northwest Coast societies known to French scholars in the various fields of social sciences. Since then, the Northwest Coast has « haunted » the French ethnographic imagination, according to Mauzé.
- 5 Franz Boas, John Reed Swanton, and Edward Sapir are among the foremost of the American and Canadian traditions, and in spite of Lévi-Strauss' structuralist twist to the Boasian (and Ratzelian) theories of diffusion, the French tradition stands in contrast to those in North America. Ira Jacknis gives the reader an inside look at the « Boas Room », i.e., the Northwest Coast Indian Hall at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The beautiful hall almost became an « aesthetic » object and has gradually acquired a mythological status after Lévi-Strauss and his French surrealist friends « discovered » it in the 1940s.
- 6 Thus, the connections between American and European scholarly traditions of the Northwest Coast ethnology can firmly be established. What about a blending of these intellectual traditions ? We do indeed find a scholar who has been working along the Northwest Coast for more than sixty years and in her work bridged the distance between American (Boasian) and European anthropology. Frederica de Laguna, author of the monumental three-volume study on the Yakutat Tlingits (1972), has been strongly influenced by French archaeologists and ethnologists, but also by Danish scholars such as Kaj Birket-Smith and Therkel Mathiassen. She was one of the first ethnologists on the Northwest Coast to conduct archaeological excavations in the Arctic (with Mathiassen) and to use historical documents in reconstructing native cultural history.
- 7 *Coming to Shore* contains an autobiographical essay of « Freddy », and also a Homage to de Laguna written by her student and colleague Marie-Françoise Guédon who has continued the empirical research among the Athapaskans, Inuit, and Tsimshian. Both these papers are highly welcomed as important contributions to the history of anthropology in general, and to the history of Northwest Coast ethnology in particular.
- 8 The editors' introduction is concluded with a statement that makes it clear that the essays collected represent a snapshot, a brief slice of time in the history of a region and a

field of study. It is true indeed, but readers will surely find it to be a most inspiring snapshot. I did.

AUTHORS

CHRISTER LINDBERG

Associate Professor of Anthropology, Lund University, Sweden